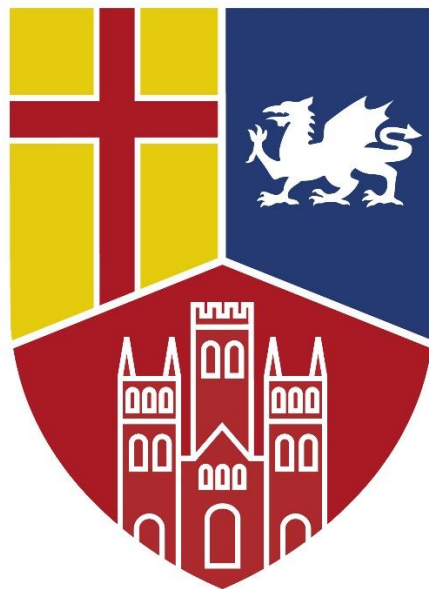


Attendance Policy



St Margaret's CE Primary School

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Document History Log:

Author of document:	Mrs Hassall	Job role:	Headteacher
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First document review	September 2025	Alice Hassall	Alice Hassall
2 nd Review			
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4 th Review			

Revisions Log:

Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs Hassall	Headteacher	0191 384 7331
	Senior Attendance Champion	
Miss Hadley	Other senior leaders with responsibility for attendance	0191 384 7331
Mrs G Ulyatt	Governor with responsibility for attendance	0191 384 7331

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: School Office, 0191 384 7331, stmargarets@durhamlearning.net, weduc.com

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Mrs Hassall	Headteacher	0191 384 7331
Miss Hadley	Deputy Headteacher	0191 384 7331

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner the school knows about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

St Margaret's CE Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils, improving attendance is everyone's business and a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. To benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer we expect all pupils to attend every session they are able to attend.

Communication with our parents and pupils is vital to working together to support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and changes are communicated to school as soon as possible. It is extremely important that school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from 08.50 – 15.20 (EYFS & KS1) and 08.55-15.30 (KS2).

EYFS and KS1 children enter school through the gate into the infant playground. KS children enter through the main office gate. Gates open at 08.45 and close at 08.55.

Registration is 08.40 for KS1 and 08.55 for KS2. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). In line with government guidance the registers will close at 09.05 KS1 and 9.20 KS2.

Pupils must be in school for the start of registration to receive a present mark, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (**Code L**).

The DfE states that pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration.

Pupils who arrive after the registers close will be recorded as a **Code U** unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence. It is still essential to come to school even if you are arriving after the registers close.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact Mrs Hassall if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on Arbor.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

The school will send a letter home outlining the cause for concern regarding punctuality and if it continues an appointment will be made to discuss any barriers and how these can be overcome.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

A detailed discussion with the family will take place and specific strategies will be agreed upon in order to support attendance.

Term dates and planned Inset days

Term dates are available on the school website: <https://www.st-margarets.durham.sch.uk/>

Leave of Absence in Term Time

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission, however Headteachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission should be (academies)/ must be (maintained schools and non-maintained special schools) requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form. Leave of absence forms can be downloaded from the school website, once completed they should be returned to school.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School (0191 384 7331 or stmargarets@durhamlearning.net or weduc.com) providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home (via phone call or email) to find out why the pupil not in school.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. Attending school before an appointment is advised. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

Where following health guidance such as a result of sickness there is no need for a parent to ring every day to explain the absence. However, for prolonged periods of illness where exclusion periods apply e.g. Chicken Pox contact is required as a minimum every 3 days.

No reason for absence provided

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action. If no contact is made from home, a follow up phone call will be made, a home visit made be necessary or a welfare check may be carried out by the police if we are concerned about the welfare of the child (safeguarding concerns).

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10-rolling school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate for irregular attendance and, if so, the matter will be referred to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Headteacher authorises absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will count as that evidence and can be accepted without question or concern.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. This will be requested when there is a need for clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

Ways in which the school promotes the importance of good attendance and punctuality:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences

- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance

Attendance data

We regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils and cohorts that require support with their attendance. This will be at a whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level. We will look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

We will also consider pupil cohorts such as those who have free school meals; special educational needs or disabilities; pupil premium; children with a social worker; children in care etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to relevant agencies and other professionals where necessary and it will be monitored by governors.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so that everyone can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with headteacher or deputy headteacher for a planning meeting. This will aim to discuss and address any issues which may be behind the persistent absence. Reminders will be given about the effect of persistent absence on a child and their well-being, including the amount of lost learning. Targets will be set for improved attendance. Parents will be informed that attendance will be closely monitored and may be invited to a follow up meeting. Including, where appropriate to wider support services (may be external to school) to identify and support with barriers to attendance

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

Meetings will be held with families to discussed as is the case with persistent absence, the local authority attendance team will be consulted to support and signpost to other agencies and to discuss whether more formal process are required.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 rolling school week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, it should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to, a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Fixed Penalty Notice or Offence Investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

This Policy should account for the specific needs of individual pupils and pupil cohorts, This Policy must be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, we have considered our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, bullying and behaviour.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.